

NAKED CAME POLONSKY:

The surrogate valentine

By JOE POLONSKY

An upstanding young gentleman appeared at three of my classes recently and proclaimed himself an employee of Council of the York Student Federation. (And let's not hear any wise cracks about "Oh I didn't know we had one").

At first, I was really quite excited by the appearance of this gentleman as he had his arm full of colorful sheets of paper. As it was just before reading week, I thought, "How nice, the student council is giving us all valentines." The student sitting beside me added "Well CYSF may not be so big on brains, but it's okay when it comes to matters of the heart".

We were fooled. The council was not giving out valentines. It was giving out course evaluations. Apparently the council squeaked out a great deal where by all the evaluations are to be computerized for a paltry \$7,000. And you just know it is going to be efficient, as it is an American computer who is to do the job. (Rumor has it that the only reason it is costing just \$7,000 is because all the information is then going to the Defence Department where the CIA will study the results to determine whether any of the students complained about their professors' Communist leanings). Asked to comment on this rumor a council member was heard to respond, "A bargain is a bargain!"

Originally the idea behind the questionnaires was to use them as a tool in fighting for a restructuring of academic possibilities at York. As they stand now they seem to offer little more than a one to five ratio comparing the professor's personality to Dick Cavett's.

The questionnaires also encourage a bureaucratic, mechanistic, computerized, non-thinking approach to the evaluation of knowledge by imposing a silly and marginal numbers game analysis of your education. Besides which, the entire enterprise was male chauvinist. "Was 'he' approachable," the question read.

Instead of substituting thinking with a sterile "I think the professor's body is 3 1/2", it perhaps would have been more fruitful to spend the 20 minutes explicitly stating what it was that bothered you about the course, thus revealing your attitudes to education as well as the professor's.

There are a lot of awful teachers at this university and if they are awful because they really do not know the first thing about teaching, then they should be exposed. But similarly, there are some good teachers who can come out looking bad mainly because the students simply failed to appreciate his or her talents. So rather than some kind of overview on the nature of the course, the professor's approach and motives in giving the course and the students' motives in taking the course, a student next year reading the results of the questionnaire will have nothing to go on but a bunch of courses most of which will probably be pegged around 3 or 4.

The whole head space surrounding a computerized analysis of ideas and the human beings involved in presenting those ideas is as insulting to knowledge as the notion that you can understand the gestalt of a course by the commercial briefs in the Calendar. But, CYSF instead of fighting fire with water, resorted to the old eye for an eye trick, and even managed to out-computerize the administration.

And speaking of the administration, the whole course evaluation syndrome gives the students a false consciousness about the nature of power at York. So what is the results show that most of the first year students do not like their Natural Science classes?

For years the Natural Science courses have managed to kill off any interest whatsoever in scientific knowledge; so that by the time you get to third or fourth year you start discovering that by Jesus, there are important and exciting things that an arts student should know about science, and how in the hell did the natural science department manage to so profoundly blow it? Instead then, of promoting actual change at York, the questionnaires merely provide an outlet for disgruntled students to let off a little steam onto their computer cards.

I still think I would have preferred a Valentine.



★ GOOD EATS ★

How to impress someone

By HARRY STINSON

There are 2,088 restaurants and cafes in Metro Toronto today (excluding fast-food outlets), so you're bound to find something to your taste if you try.

But one of the best is surprisingly a recently-converted row-house on Marlborough Avenue (Yonge at Summerhill). Troy's International Cuisine is listed as a French restaurant, but as the name implies, the menu is by no means nationally restricted, and in fact is changed completely every two weeks.

Straight off, let me make it quite clear that you can expect to pay for it: the price of the average entrée (which includes your whole meal incidentally) will run slightly over \$8. As selection is limited the food is deliciously cooked to order and stunningly arranged. One feature in particular sets Troy's up there with the Westbury, Winston's and the Café de L'Auberge: instead of mundane rolls, you're served a loaf of white bread, fresh hot out of the oven.

The appetizers when we were there were escargots in garlic butter or pastry stuffed with cream chicken. Though mouth-watering, they were overshadowed by the soups; these seem to be a house specialty and are unbelievable. At this point, the North American predilection for quantity has given way to an appreciation of quality, an entirely appropriate frame of mind from which to view the salads.

Most likely you will have forgotten by now what you ordered as a main course, but no matter, it will arrive, perfectly prepared (and special note must be made here in Toronto that this judgement does include the vegetables).

But don't sit back and rub your stomach in satisfaction yet (especially in Troy's which is so small — two, tiny front rooms — that you'll probably hit the entire waiting staff and knock him into the comfortably glowing fireplace. The desserts are maddeningly delicious. And this whole experience is set in a decor of Canadian antique furniture, simply arranged so as to squeeze in the eight tables. What with the unobtrusive but obliging service and an unbeatable mood food combination, this is the place to go if you want to impress someone (they won't be very impressed however, if you fail to make the mandatory reservations. . .)

If, perchance, you should not feel inclined/adequately-bankrolled to indulge in Troy's International, but should still want to impress (or in this case perhaps non-plus) someone, serve them a Steak tartare.

To prepare this elaborate dish, take some freshly ground round or sirloin steak (not hamburger, for God's sake, as you'll soon see why), and mold it into a large oval patty. Mustering your culinary skill, make an indent in the centre. Break a raw egg into this, keeping the yolk in the hole. Sprinkle with salt and fresh-ground black pepper, surround the patty with capers, parsley, and fine chopped onion, and serve. That's right, you haven't forgotten anything, just serve it as is. (It's perfectly good, but I trust you washed your hands before making this one!) Next week: Soul Food.



Michael Vordnong, York's first candidate for the looney bin, went stark raving mad after being trapped in the Science Building elevator. He was confined for 7 hours between floors with seven bats, two toads, a pickled verblatt and three screaming meemies.